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ABSTRACT

A study was commissioned by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Bureau for Africa, to investigate the changing roles of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in basic education in Africa. This Malawi case study was conducted by the Centre for Educational Research and Training of the University of Malawi. Information for the study was collected through interviews with key stakeholders in crucial institutions such as the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST); Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Service (MoGYCS), the ministry responsible for NGO registration; donor agencies that are currently responsible for youth registration; donor agencies that are currently using NGOs to implement their programs, particularly in basic education and NGOs directly involved in education. The study used nine NGOs and four international, three local, and two networking coalitions. Six lessons learned from NGO experience in the education sector in Malawi were: (1) regulation of NGOs within the sector is weak; (2) MoEST should monitor NGO activities and give direction to ensure coherence and harmony in efforts exerted within the sector; (3) the little interaction that exists between NGOs and MoEST is superficial, with weak mechanisms for collaboration; (4) absence of meaningful interaction between NGOs and MoEST robs the system of opportunities to scale up programs; (5) in the recent past, the roles of NGOs in education in Malawi have evolved from service provision to policy advocacy; and (6) NGOs could do well to involve MoEST from the designing to the implementation stages of innovations to increase the chance of government adopting the innovations nationally. (Contains 13 references.) (BT)

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Bureau for Africa, Office of Sustainable Development

Centre for Educational Research and Training, University of Malawi

THE CHANGING ROLES OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN EDUCATION IN MALAWI

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THE CHANGING ROLES OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN EDUCATION IN MALAWI

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MARCH 2002

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADRA	Adventist Relief Agency
CDA	Community Development Assistant
CONGOMA	Council for Non-Governmental Organisations
CRECCOM	Creative Centre for Community Mobilisation
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
FAWEMA	Forum for African Women Educationalists Malawi
GABLE	Girl's Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education
GABLE SMC	GABLE Social Mobilisation Campaign
HIV/AIDS	Human Immune Deficiency/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
JCE	Junior Certificate of Education
MANEB	Malawi National Examination Board
MASAF	Malawi Social Action Fund
MIE	Malawi Institute of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MoGYCS	Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PEA	Primary Education Advisor
PIF	Policy and Investment Framework
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSLCE	Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
QUEST	
SAFE	Sub Saharan African Family Enrichment
SHARED	
SCF (US)	Save the Children Federation Inc (US)
TUM	Teachers Union of Malawi
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VBS	Village Based Schools
VDC	Village Development Committee

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The study was commissioned by the United States Agency for International Development, Bureau for Africa, through the American Institutes of Research and the Support for Analysis and Research in Africa (SARA) project at the Academy for Educational Development in order to investigate the changing roles of NGOs in basic education in Africa. The Malawi case study was conducted by the Centre for Educational Research and Training of the University of Malawi.

Objectives of the study:

The main objectives of the study were to:

- Provide information on the role NGOs are currently playing or are intending to play in strengthening education and civil society in Malawi
- Facilitate discussions on the new roles of NGOs in education among donors, the Ministry of Education and NGO partners.
- To assist donors, USAID missions and host governments in the design, use and management of NGO-implemented programmes.

Method

Information for the study was collected through interviews with key stakeholders in crucial institutions such as the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST); Ministry of Gender; Youth and Community Service (MOGYCS) which is the Ministry responsible for NGO registration; donor agencies who are currently responsible for youth registration; donor agencies who are currently using NGOs to implement their programmes particularly in basic education and NGOs directly involved in education.

Altogether, the study used nine NGOs four of which were international, three were local and the last two were networking coalitions. The interviews focused on the history of NGO involvement in the education sector, NGO and Government relationships, roles of NGOs in policy change, the role of NGOs in community empowerment and civil society linkages and the relationships between NGOs and donors. Related literature was also used to complement the information from interviews.

History of NGO involvement in Education

The involvement of NGOs in education can be traced from the end of the 19th Century when missionaries introduced formal education in the country. The main aim of schooling was to spread Christianity but apart form teaching the bible the schools which were opened also offered lessons such as reading, writing, counting, carpentry, brick laying and needlecraft. The growth of formal schooling can be charted into four periods and these were the early missionaries from

1875 to 1925, late colonial period from 1925 to 1995, the post colonial period and the post democratisation period from 1994.

In the early missionary period each mission was operating according to its own code. There was no central body to coordinate and give direction in matters of policy, standards and curricula. The Protectorate Government began to be sympathetic to the efforts of the missions when there was an indication of unification of the education systems in 1901. In 1907 the government started contributing some money towards the unified missions but this remained as low as 10% of the required costs even by the end of the 1920s.

The government started participating fully in 1926 by establishing a Department of Education after pressure from international bodies. The Government proceeded to take control by laying down guiding principles in the provision of education but providing little financial support to back up its claims. In the 1940s the government established secondary education which necessitated a centrally administered system and as a result of the Phillips Commission in 1961 a ministry of education was established. This period saw a more organised approach but still the government had much fewer schools than the mission agencies that were running their schools.

The post-colonial era did not allow NGOs to flourish. Only a small number of NGOs were involved mostly in adult literacy and early childhood education. A poor human rights record contributed to the limited NGO involvement.

The post democratisation period saw a proliferation of both international and local NGOs in education. It now seems that most NGOs do not have the capacity to implement education programmes, which are labour intensive and require holistic approaches. However the NGOs are mostly unregulated yet they lack financial and managerial capabilities. In this way NGOs stand little chance of impacting on policy. There is duplication of efforts especially in donor agency priority areas such as HIV/AIDS, orphan care, human rights and gender.

The challenges faced by NGOs include problems in making an impact on the system. Their small-scale programmes have little chance of being felt and scaled up. Sustainability of projects is therefore a major challenge.

Relationship between NGOs and Government

The early colonial or missionary era saw little collaboration between the Protectorate Government and the missions. After the establishment of the Department of Education in 1926 Government funding to education increased but still fell far short of missions contributions. In the post-colonial era the government assumed total control over education issues such as policy, curriculum, deployment of teachers and provision of teaching materials. Though the government worked in partnership with existing NGOs the political climate allowed little constructive dialogue over policy and issues. Advocacy for policy change would have invited suspicion from the government.

After democratisation the government left NGOs to do as they pleased with very little regulation and monitoring. The relationship that now exists depends on the nature of programmes being

implemented. Those NGOs involved in advocacy feel government is paranoid about their existence while government thinks such NGOs are confrontational.

Government sees international NGOs as troublemakers and local NGOs as mere opportunists. A new NGO law has now been passed by Parliament intended to monitor NGO activities.

The mandate to register NGOs in Malawi is vested in the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services. A series of procedures is required until the responsibility of specific NGOs is relinquished to relevant ministries. The process of registration is lengthy and may result in delays in getting permission from parent Ministries and to obtain membership from CONGOMA. Some quarters of the NGO community feel that government is exerting too much control over them. The major problem in the new registration process is that multi-sectoral NGOs will need to go through all parent ministries therefore prone to bureaucratic delays. It may also be difficult for all ministries to agree on the working modalities of such NGOs.

At present it appears there are no mechanisms that allow meaningful interaction between the various levels of MoEST and NGOs. There is collaboration at district level between NGOs and DEO but not much between the DEO and Central offices. Amongst NGOs themselves coordination of activities is poor and this results in duplication of efforts. The issue of decentralisation to district level will pose problems of equity among districts and coordination between districts and Central offices.

The nature of a programme being implement determines to a large extent the relationships between NGOs and government. Where NGOs are implementing a nationally designed programme and Government lacks capacity the relationship has been harmonious especially when consensus has been advocated throughout the programme. In contrast controversy has ensued where NGOs design programmes with little interaction and collaboration with the Ministry. Lack of networking systems at the Ministry itself has also affected relationships with NGOs. There have also been frequent changes in education policy issues creating problems for NGOs. Another factor is that MoEST does not involve the NGO community in the education policy process resulting in misunderstanding between the two sides.

It is MoEST's expectations that all NGOs should adhere to Government policy and standards. In cases where NGOs are trying-out innovations or pilot programmes they tend to clash with policy and standards. However, the insistence of Government that NGOs should work within existing policy frameworks sometimes frustrates the good intentions where NGOs are using innovative and new approaches of delivering education where current policies have failed. Some flexibility on the part of government could allow for other avenues of expanding and improving the system.

There exists some quarters in the Government who see NGOs as implementing donor programmes and that the NGOs do not feel compelled to consult the Ministry when presenting proposals for funding. There are also cases where the Ministry feels NGOs are competitors in soliciting funding from donors. Another dimension is that sometimes donors act as brokers when NGOs and government misunderstand each other.

Role of NGOs in Policy Changes

Generally government has not fully welcomed NGOs' involvement in the policy development process. There is a general feeling that NGO activities should be limited to their traditional roles of service provision particularly in areas where government lacks capacity. However, government is slowly acknowledging the role NGOs can play in policy development. There is evidence that NGOs have managed to influence policy direction though not successful in effecting policy changes. The NGOs implementing government -sanctioned programmes are more likely to affect policy than those working on their own. Furthermore small-scale programmes run by NGOs are more difficult to scale up than national programmes and therefore less likely to influence policy.

Some NGOs have employed networking and advocacy while others have used demonstration of new ideas and innovations to try to influence policy change. Dissemination of research findings and strategy papers at various fora have also been advocated by NGOs to influence policy. Some methods have been confrontational but this approach seems to have been toned down.

Role of NGOs in Community Empowerment and Civil Society Linkages

Most NGOs in education have adopted a multi-sectoral approach to development and are implementing education programmes alongside agriculture, food security, orphan care and others. Community empowerment has been part and parcel of their strategies and this is an area where government lacks capacity.

Capacity building mainly in form of training is a major strategy for empowerment. First a needs assessment acts as an entry point into the community. The NGOs involve community leaders at all relevant levels thus establishing the necessary linkages. In so doing the NGOs offer opportunities for the grass-root communities to link up with policy makers in a bottom-top direction. Similarly NGOs are increasingly using government field personnel thus promoting linkages between various ministries. NGOs have also acted as donors to other NGOs to increase the linkage and networking.

Relationship between NGOs and Donors

The nature of relationship and collaboration between Donors and NGOs is again determined by the nature of programmes being implemented. Where government is perceived to lack capacity donors have relied on NGOs' expertise and experience to implement aspects of their support. NGOs have also depended on donors to fund NGO designed programmes. However, this tends to compromise the initial proposals because donors exact their own interests and priorities. Other sources of funding for NGOs in education have included child sponsorship, partnerships with other NGOs and from private organisations.

A number of challenges exist in NGO and donor relationships. Some donors are reluctant to use NGOs because the later have questionable financial management and human resources capacities. It has also been noted that once agreements are made donor funds are slow to

materialise. It is also the case that once time frames demanded by donors have been exceeded NGOs find it extremely difficult to retrieve promised funding.

Mission statements guide NGOs in identifying areas of need. However donor dependency has made their projects to be largely donor driven dwelling more on donor priorities. The integrated approach to development adopted by many NGOs may not conform to all donor priorities in specific areas and this creates difficulties in striking middle working grounds. Again apparent competition among donors to gain an upper hand in influencing government policy has adverse impact on the work of some NGOs.

Donors recognise that NGOs are in a better position to articulate the needs of communities and therefore are an important element in the policy formulation process. Some donors project an expanded role of NGO once the decentralisation process is complete because of lack of capacity at district level. The increasing level of donor support to NGO efforts is a clear testimony that donors are increasingly accepting the potential of NGOs as development partners.

Lessons Learned

The following are some of the lessons learned from NGO experience in the education sector in Malawi: -

1. Regulation of NGOs within the sector is weak. There is need for MoEST to regulate their operations without curbing their potential for developing new ideas and innovations where government has limited capacity.

2. MoEST should monitor NGO activities and give direction to ensure coherence and harmony in the efforts exerted within the sector.

3. The little interaction that exists between NGOs and MoEST is superficial and this has resulted from weak or non-existent mechanisms for collaboration.

4. The absence of meaningful interaction between NGOs and MoEST robs the system of opportunities to scale up programmes. Indeed MoEST needs to sanction scaling -up but cannot do so without taking into consideration all parameters and risks involved in a centrally controlled system.

5. In the recent past the roles of NGOs in education in Malawi have evolved from service provision to policy advocacy. MoEST should accept the various roles NGOs can play even when their activities do not necessarily fall within policy frameworks.

6. NGOs could do well to involve MoEST from the designing to the implementation stages of innovations to increase the chance of government adopting them nationally.

7. NGOs have not influenced government policy because the projects are small and the designs of their programmes have not incorporated sustenance after donors have pulled out.

8. Lack of credibility and transparency has contributed to the reluctance of donors and government to fund NGO activities. The new NGO law requiring financial accountability will go a long way in restoring donor and government confidence in NGOs.

9. The NGO community in the education sector is small and weakly networked. Coalitions in the sector need to work closely together to create a greater impact on advocacy for policy change.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study was commissioned by USAID Bureau for Africa through the American Institutes of Research (AIR) in order to investigate the changing roles of NGOs in basic education in Africa. The Malawi case study was conducted by the Centre for Educational Research and Training of the University of Malawi.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the Malawi country case study were to:

- Provide information on the role NGOs are currently playing or are hoping to play in strengthening education and civil society in Malawi.
- Facilitate discussions on the new roles of NGOs in education among donors, ministries of education and NGO partners.
- To assist donors, USAID missions, and host governments in the design, use and management of the NGO- implemented education programs.

1.2 Methodology

Information for the study was collected mainly through interviews with key stakeholders in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST); Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services (MoGYCS) which is the ministry responsible for NGO registration; donor agencies who are currently using NGOs to implement their programmes and selected NGOs directly involved in the implementation of education programmes particularly in basic education. The study focussed on nine NGOs and civil society networking groups working within the education sector, four of which were international, three were local and two were networking groups. The criteria for selecting the nine NGOs for the study were direct involvement in the implementation of formal basic education programmes or in advocacy. Additional information was obtained from reports and programme documents. The interviews focussed on five key areas of interest to the study and these were: - the history of NGO involvement in the education sector; NGO and government relationships; role of NGOs in policy change; role of NGOs in community empowerment and civil society linkages and NGO and donor relationships.

1.3 Structure of the Report

The report is organised into seven main sections. The first section is the introduction to the study. An outline of the history of NGOs involvement in the education sector in Malawi and a description of current NGO activities within the education sector is given in the second section. The third section examines the nature of the relationships between NGOs and government both past and current levels of interaction and potential areas of conflict. An assessment of the impact of NGOs on policy change within the education sector follows in the fourth section and the fifth section examines the impact of NGOs on community empowerment and civil society linkages. The sixth section examines the relationship between NGOs and donors. Lastly the seventh section is a synthesis of lessons learned from NGOs' involvement in the education sector to date.

2.0 THE HISTORY OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS' INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

2.1 Introduction

Formal education in Malawi was introduced by Western missionaries at the end of the 19th Century. The main aim of schooling was to spread the word of God. Missionaries wanted to evangelize and it was thought that if the Africans were taught to read and write the task of teaching them the new religion would be easier. Therefore schools were started at mission sites in different parts of the country with the first schools opening between 1875 and 1926. In this sense the history of NGOs' participation in the education sector in Malawi is directly linked to the history of formal education itself. The missionaries were the first NGOs to be involved in education in Malawi and were dominant players in education up to the period before 1994. Civil society based NGOs followed much later but these have always been fewer in number.

This section charts the development of formal education during four distinct periods. First the part outlines the activities during the 1875–1925 period when the missionaries were introducing formal education and the second part covers the period from 1926 to 1963 when the colonial government took interest in education of the Africans. The third part lays out the expansion of the education system during the post independence Banda era and finally the last part of the section charts the involvement of NGOs in education and in the post 1994 period with the advent of a democratically elected government.

2.2 The Early Colonial Period 1875-1925: Early Missionaries

The first school was opened along the Lakeshore in the 1875 by the Livingstonia Mission. Apart from teaching the Bible the school offered lessons in reading, writing, counting, carpentry, bricklaying and needlecraft. By the turn of the century other missions like Presbyterians, Anglicans, Baptists and Catholics had opened their schools and expanded in scope enrolling more pupils, engaging more teachers and producing more evangelizers. Missions were scattered across the country in the North, the Centre and the South all gaining prominence and acclaim in both their religious and educational achievements.

The early stages were full of challenges. At first, each mission was operating according to its own code and adopting its own curricula and management systems. There was no central body to coordinate and give direction and guidance on matters of policy, standards and curricula. The protectorate government had no funds to supplement the missions' efforts and therefore played no part in the education of Africans. This resulted in a wide range of standards of schools being established. There was little effort to unify the system in order to produce a common approach to education. Later in 1901 some missions organized themselves to follow a common code but others resisted this because it was thought that such an approach would be restrictive and not allow innovations. On the strength of this movement toward unification the government began to be sympathetic to the efforts of the missions and in 1907 contributed some money toward the provision of education by the unified missions. Increases in the contribution were nominal and the problem of funding was remained cute because government still provided only 10% of the costs required in the education sector by the end of the 1920s. The missions had to use

indigenous materials such as mud huts and classes under trees for teaching and learning which made the task cumbersome (Pachai, 1973; Banda, 1982).

2.3 Late Colonial Period 1926-1963: Government Takes Control

The turning point in government participation in education followed the Phelps Stokes Commission of 1924, which among other things recommended the establishment of an agency with the responsibility of coordinating and supervising the missionaries' education efforts and the need to redesign the curriculum. This led to the establishment of the Department of Education in 1926 by the colonial government. Thus, it was pressure from international bodies as well as colonial masters rather than internal developments that led to the creation of the Department Of Education in 1926. After this the government proceeded to take control of education in the country.

The 1926- 1940 period saw the expansion of the primary sector into other sectors with the State laying down the guiding principles but providing little funding to back up its claims, leaving the financing of education largely still in the hands of missionaries who were contributing up to 90 percent of the total education expenditures.

From the 1940s, a number of developments in the education sector led the government to assume greater control over education reducing the edge and independence the missionaries had over education in the previous seventy years or so. In 1940 the Department of Education agreed to establish secondary education, which, necessitated the introduction of centrally, administered examinations for selection of students from primary to secondary. The introduction of secondary education also influenced changes in the primary curriculum from practical to academic. The colonial government set the standards for curriculum content. The Phillips commission of 1961 recommended among other things greater public control in educational development and led to the establishment of the Ministry of Education in the same year.

The characteristic of the period is that education providers and non-governmental institutions were getting more organized with the government giving direction and support where it could. Still the government had much fewer schools than mission agencies. The various missionaries created education agencies to oversee the establishment and running of their schools. Catholic Church for example established an education department under the Catholic Secretariat in 1961. The major aim of the Secretariat was to provide a link between the Church and the Ministry of Education and in effect started functioning as a Church Non-Governmental Organisation involved in the education sector.

2.4 The Post Colonial Period 1964-1994: The Banda Era

During the Banda period, the government further consolidated its control over education. By this time the missionaries, because of financial problems, had surrendered the control of their schools to government. At both primary and secondary levels, the government took over the recruitment and deployment of teachers, payment of teacher salaries, selection of students and provision of supplies in most of the mission owned schools. A few missionaries chose to remain independent, for example the Seventh Day Adventist church did not ask for financial assistance

from government thus retained control over their schools. Thus during the Banda period, the missionaries participation was reduced to that of assisting government in providing resources to the education system mainly through the construction of schools. Given the authoritarian climate that existed at the time in which no dissenting views were entertained, the church based NGOs had no role to play in decision making despite that the majority of schools were owned by them.

The restrictive political climate during the Banda period did not allow NGOs to flourish as a result there was limited participation of NGOs from civil society both local and international. Church based NGOs dominated during this period probably because the Banda government tolerated them more and perceived them to be easier to handle than civil society based NGOs. That very few of the NGOs that were established during this period were involved in the education sector is perhaps not very surprising given that education sector was by this time centrally controlled. Civil society based NGO activities in education were also largely restricted to construction of schools and provision of school supplies. Only a small number of NGOs were involved in the direct implementation of basic educational programmes and this was mostly in the areas of adult literacy and early childhood education. There was very little involvement of NGOs in human development and capacity building and more especially in the areas of advocacy and community empowerment. During the period questioning of government policy was treated as questioning the authority of the president hence no place for policy lobbying and advocacy. The poor humanitarian record of the Banda government may have also contributed to the limited NGO involvement due to the fact that some bilateral donors who traditionally provide funding to NGOs were not providing assistance to Malawi.

2.5 The Post Democratisation Period: c 1994

This period saw the proliferation of both international and local NGOs however, very few have focussed their attention on education, for example out of a nearly 200 NGOs registered in 1999 less than 40 had education components (CONGOMA 1999). This seems to be the case because the education sector itself is vast with so many interrelated issues, which require a holistic approach, and is labour intensive. And yet most of the NGOs do not have capacity to implement education programmes.

The democratisation process characterised by more openness and less restrictions, has paved the way for many different NGOs to work in Malawi. Political and economic liberalisation and accessibility to donor funds are some of the factors that have enabled the NGOs to flourish. The growth of the NGO sector in Malawi has been largely unregulated, in particular a multitude of new local NGOs have mushroomed most of which lack financial and managerial capabilities and whose accountability and transparency have remained questionable. In addition, this growth has resulted in duplication of efforts among NGOs with the majority of local NGOs choosing to operate in areas that are seen as marketable in terms of donor funding and priorities such as HIV/AIDS, orphan care, human rights and gender. This might partly explain the low involvement of NGOs in the education sector particularly as donor funding to education has been mainly channelled through government rather than NGOs in Malawi. Reports of financial mismanagement among some of these local NGOs have made the government realise the need for tighter control and regulation of the NGO sector. A new law that will govern NGOs was

passed by Parliament in 2000 and assented by President in 2001 and is still waiting to be gazetted before it comes into effect.

2.6 Nature of NGO Involvement in the Education Sector

As indicated earlier, the extent of involvement of NGOs in the education sector in Malawi is small and insignificant particularly when taking into account the vastness of the education sector. The 1999 directory of NGOs produced by CONGOMA listed 56 NGOs as implementing education and skills training programmes. Of these about 34 were implementing programmes in formal education while the rest concentrated on skills training. The majority of these NGOs are local.

There has been a change in focus of NGO activity in education from mere construction of schools and provision of other 'hardware components' to a more direct involvement in the implementation of education programmes and also in the policy formulation process. For example, two coalitions for policy advocacy have emerged for advocating policy change in education. Other individual NGOs like FAWEMA, Action Aid and CRECCOM have also adopted empowerment as the one of their objectives. SCF (US) has been involved in the implementation of education innovations in the area of curriculum and community participation in school governance.

It would appear most NGOs have adopted a multi-sectoral approach to development and education being just a part of their programmes. For instance NGOs working in orphan care and HIV/AIDS prevention have usually included education components in their programmes. Other NGOs such as Action Aid and World Vision International have adopted a multi-sectoral approach including education, health, food security and nutrition, water and sanitation, capacity building and economic empowerment.

Financing of education activities of NGOs has always been a problem since time immemorial. Funding is particularly a more of a problem for local NGOs than the international NGOs. Almost all the local NGOs listed in the CONGOMA directory cited funding as a major constraint and most relied on local fundraising to finance their activities (with the exception of the Church based NGOs who also got funding from their sister churches abroad). Consequently, their areas of operation and scope of work tended to be small and limited usually confined to one district or a single location in one district. Partly because of financial constraints, local NGOs with the exception of the religious based NGOs have tended to work in urban areas, with very few serving rural areas.

Partnerships between NGOs and between NGOs and donors for purposes of implementation and funding from which the less privileged local NGOs could benefit are few. A number of local NGOs in orphan care and HIV/AIDS programmes benefited from DANIDA support channelled through the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) a NGO with both local and international presence. CARE International for example has supported a number of NGOs to participate in the development of a national strategy for primary school management. Other international NGOs such as CARE international and Oxfam were also planning to support local NGOs in capacity building and also in providing funding for their activities. Major donors have

been particularly reluctant to fund local NGOs directly given the poor financial management record and lack of credibility and have preferred to channel the funding to the well-established and credible NGOs. Government too, has provided funding and other kinds of support to NGOs though this has been to a limited extent compared to donors. For instance MoEST has provided FAWEMA support in form of office space among other things. Under MASAF II some local NGOs have been funded to implement programmes in HIV/AIDS. The experience so far has been that local NGOs have not been able to account for money received. Because of lack of financial accountability, it is not clear whether government will continue channelling funds through NGOs under MASAF III.

2.7 Major Challenges

NGOs in education face major challenges in implementing education programmes. The sheer size of the education sector which is centrally controlled make it difficult for NGOs to operate without any restraints and even to make their impact on the ground to be felt. NGO activities in education have therefore tended to be localised and concentrated in one area. As such one of the major problems NGOs in education have faced is that of scaling up. In most cases NGO interventions have not spread out beyond the project area and as such their impact has tended to be limited to specific areas they are operating in. There has been an implicit assumption that government would scale up NGO activities once they have demonstrated impact, but to a large extent this has not happened either because NGOs programmes have been poorly linked up with government programmes and plans and also because of lack of coordination and consultation between the two. Most NGOs programmes have ended up as projects and lack of coordination both within the NGO community and also with government has meant that there is little learning from each other and that there are usually many and disparate innovations and ideas being tried out by NGOs.

For instance, in the case of the Village Based Schools (VBS) programme, the major problem that SCF (US) faced was that there were poor linkages with Ministry of Education at all levels (Bernbaum 1998). MOE only sanctioned it as a pilot but there was no clear understanding regarding what would be done with the lessons learned from the programme. In addition, high turnover of key officials in the ministry particularly at the beginning of the project prevented a coherent decision making process. Another problem was that the objectives of the programme were never clearly articulated at the outset. The major challenges that the VBS programme faced were that of sustainability and scaling up. The original plan to hand over the schools to local NGOs in the community did not materialise. It would appear that the targeted indigenous NGOs were also in the process of relinquishing the control and financing of their schools to government in line with government policy of free primary education so it was highly unlikely that they would assume responsibility over the VBS schools. Further, most of the community-based organisations suffer from acute shortage of resources and given the experience of unassisted schools that existed before 1994, it was highly likely that some of the schools would close without any support from government and other agencies. Scaling up was also problematic because the VBS was unable to influence government policy and in the end the VBS concept remained localised in the three districts that they were operating in.

The multi-sectoral approach adopted by most NGOs, poses its own challenges. The integrated approach might be restrictive in the sense that NGOs may not be able to scale up one part of the programme nationally or widely if need be because this would go against their objectives. In addition, in a centralised system of government, linkages have to be established between the NGO and the various government ministries, which may be both time consuming and demanding especially given that most NGOs have thin staff on the ground. Thus multi-sectoral programmes run the danger of being poorly linked up with the relevant departments of the government. In this light decentralisation with its implied multi-sectoral approach will ease some of these challenges.

Little attention has also being paid to the issue of sustainability; rather there has been so much enthusiasm over the implementation of new approaches. The majority of NGOs in education are not directly funded from central government coffers. Rather NGO programmes have largely been funded by donors or through local resources. Sustainability of such programmes beyond project life and donor funding has been one of the major challenges and government has rarely taken over such programmes. In case of locally funded NGOs irregularities in funding inflows has hampered the effective implementation of their programmes.

Education is highly labour intensive endeavour and yet most NGOs especially the local ones, do not have the capacity to implement education programmes. Instead they rely on government capacity thereby overstretching the already burdened system. For example, different NGOs have relied heavily on government field level personnel particularly PEAs and CDAs to reach out to communities and schools, which has affected the performance of these field level personnel. It has often been alleged that PEAs and CDAs have gravitated towards NGO programmes because they pay higher allowances than government thereby neglecting their mandated roles.

2.8 Summary

In summary there appears to have been very little NGO involvement in education from the colonial era to the period prior to the coming of the democratically elected government in 1994. Religious NGOs predominated the participation as providers of education and partners with government. The post independence era saw a few NGOs participating mainly in construction of classrooms. After 1994 a few more NGOs showed interest in education in various aspects ranging from access and quality to lobbying and advocacy for policy change. All have faced challenges in the different areas especially in establishing themselves and convincing government to recognize their efforts as worth incorporating in policy formulation. The government welcomes the emergence of NGOs but wishes to see them as partners rather than pressure groups and hence there is a strong movement towards the regulation NGOs participation through legislation. It is widely accepted that government alone cannot address the many pressing issues in the education sector and hence the need to work together with NGOs. The move by NGOs to form coalitions is also testimony to the need for NGOs to work in a concerted manner.

3.0 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NGOs and GOVERNMENT

3.1 Nature of the Relationship

The relationship between government and NGOs has historically evolved from the early period of NGO involvement when the colonial government was somewhat indifferent to the activities of the early missionaries in education to one based on suspicion and mistrust during the Banda period and finally to post democratisation period of laissez faire when the field has been left open for NGOs to operate almost without any mechanisms to regulate their activities.

During the early colonial period at least up to the late 1920's there was little collaboration between the colonial government and the church based NGOs who were the only agencies responsible for education provision in the country. These NGOs operated without any intervention from government. They were responsible for all aspects of education provision including education policy, curriculum and financing of their education programmes. Education was not a concern of the colonial government and this might explain their indifference to what was happening on the ground.

This changed from 1926 with the establishment of the Department of Education by the colonial government. A year later the education ordinance spelling out the ground rules for the education sector was enacted. This represented the first attempt of government to assume more control over education and regulate missionaries' activities in the sector. Government financing to the education sector also increased though their contribution still fell far short of what the missionaries were contributing. The nature of relationship during the colonial period was one of collaboration and mutual trust though there is some evidence to suggest that some missions were resentful of the increasing government involvement particularly as government made very little contribution to the provision of education (Pachai, 1973 and Banda, 1980).

The relationship between NGOs and government entered a new phase in the period immediately after independence. The relationship between the Banda government and NGOs was based on suspicion and mistrust. Government reacted by exerting more control over NGOs activities including the missionaries. Government assumed total control over education policy, curriculum, deployment of teachers, payment of teacher salaries and provision of teaching and learning materials. Financial difficulties had forced missionaries to hand over the control of their schools to government, which resulted in the loss of the independence that they had enjoyed during the colonial era. They now had to toe the government line. Though government worked in partnership with existing NGOs, the authoritarian climate existing at the time meant that there was no room for constructive dialogue and discussion over policy and issues. As one of the church based NGOs interviewed put it, *'Prior to 1994 we could not discuss anything or even complain. We were just told what to do and expected to accept without question'.*

Given the political climate, most NGOs concentrated their activities in school construction, provision of teaching and learning materials i.e. the hardware components. There were virtually no NGOs involved in advocacy for policy change, which would have invited suspicion from the government.

The democratisation process contributed to the proliferation of both local and international NGOs mainly from civil society. Relationship between NGOs and government improved and there is more tolerance and flexibility on the part of government. However, advocacy roles taken on by some NGOs especially the human rights based NGOs have created tensions between them and the government.

The immediate post 1994 period, government adopted a laissez faire approach with NGOs almost given a free field to operate, with limited regulation and monitoring from government resulting in among other things in duplication of effort and a concentration of NGO activity in one location and area. Within the education sector things have not been any different. The perception of the majority of officials from the donor community, government and NGOs interviewed was that the regulation of NGOs within the sector is weak. As one respondent in the study noted, *'MoEST has actually been paying little attention to NGOs lately. NGOs have no pressure put on them.... left to themselves to develop'.*

The nature of relationship between NGOs and government is determined by the nature of the programmes being implemented and also the specific NGO itself. The relationship between NGOs who are implementing government projects such as Creative Associates Inc and CRECCOM and SCF (US) has been very close in the sense that the government collaborates closely with the NGOs.

While the relationship between MoEST and NGOs could be described as cordial in some cases, in other cases it largely depends on the nature of NGO activity and may not be harmonious. For example, NGOs involved in advocacy feel that the treatment they get from MoEST is paranoid on the other hand MoEST feels that these NGOs have a confrontational attitude. Among senior MoEST officials there is a general consensus that the new NGOs particularly those in advocacy have created problems for MoEST because of the way they operate. In the words of one MoEST official. ...'They *are more like a pressure group'.... They are stubborn and do not listen to government views. They are not ready to listen to government stand on things'.* The changing role of NGOs in education in Malawi from a purely service provision role to take on a policy advocacy role seemed to have created new tensions between MoEST and NGOs. MoEST seems to have been taken by surprise by the new roles NGOs are assuming particularly as they involve asking the ministry to account for its activities and taking an active role in the policy formulation process, areas, which have been exclusively government, concern for many years. These developments have created a new perception that International NGOs, which have been at the forefront of this change, are problematic and trouble makers. Local NGOs on the other hand are perceived to be more of opportunists, who are more concerned with employment creation than providing a service to the poor.

In the wider sector, the government perceives the NGOS as lacking in transparency, accountability, focus of their missions and operating in a laissez faire manner. These developments in the NGO sector have forced government to rethink its position and intervene to regulate the sector more tightly. Currently, a new NGO law has been passed by Parliament, which will create a regulatory body to monitor the activities of NGOs.

3.2 Nature of Interaction between NGOs and Government

Process for NGO Registration

The Ministry mandated to register and regulate all NGOs in Malawi is the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services. Under the current laws, NGOs are required to register under the Trustees Act or the Company Act. NGOs are also required to bring the necessary documentation to support their application including list of board members or trustees, a letter of approval from the parent ministry, constitution and organisational objectives and goals. International NGOs also expected to present the registration certificate from the parent organisation. Once MoGYCS is satisfied that all requirements have been met a memorandum of understanding between the NGO and government is signed after which MoGYCS advises the relevant ministry. Once the registration process is over, the NGO ceases to be the concern of MoGYCS; the ministry does not follow up on the NGO. It is up to the parent ministry to monitor the activities of the NGO.

Some of the NGOs interviewed indicated that though there is more flexibility now after the change of government in 1994, the process of registration could still be difficult and affected by bureaucratic delays. For example, MoGYCS may refer the application back to Ministry of Justice or the parent ministry. During interviews with NGOs it was mentioned that it has taken some NGOs up to two years to get registered. This is particularly true in cases where the government is not too sure about the credibility of the NGO.

Under the new NGO law currently being enacted, a registration body will be established and NGOs will apply to this board for registration. All NGOs will be required to be members of CONGOMA before registration and must also obtain a letter of permission to operate from the parent ministry, which must indicate the areas where the NGO would operate. The new law also makes provisions for the creation of a regulatory body, which will be charged with the monitoring of the activities of NGO.

The new NGO law has met strong opposition from some quarters of the NGO community (particularly human rights NGOs) who feel that government is exerting too much control over them and also oppose the establishment of CONGOMA as the regulator. The new law clearly defines the parameters within which NGOs can operate. Government has moved in to regulate the activities of the NGO sector because of a number of reasons. First, there is lack of financial accountability and transparency on the part of some NGOs. Second there, there is also a feeling that some NGOs were crossing the boundaries of operation and venturing into politics and the new law will put a stop to this. And lastly, is the need to regulate NGO operations and locate them on the basis of need.

However, the multi-sectoral approach taken by most NGOs poses a challenge because with the new law it means that approval has to be sought from all parent ministries. Administratively this maybe a daunting task. Similarly, from the government side it may not be easy for all government ministries to agree on the working modalities of an NGO, which has taken a multi-sectoral approach. Decentralisation, however may offer an opportunity to ease some of these potential bureaucratic bottlenecks if approval is obtained at district level through the District Development Committee and its technical advisory body the District Executive Committee,

which by nature is multi-sectoral and is responsible for technical evaluation of development projects proposed by communities and /or Area Development Committees (Mvula et al 2000).

Collaboration and Monitoring

There are no mechanisms in place to allow meaningful interaction between the various levels of MoEST and NGOs working within the sector. The linkages between NGOs and different levels of the ministry have been unsatisfactory. At the national level, the planning unit of the ministry is supposed to collaborate with all NGOs operating in the education sector. At the district level, NGOs collaborate with the district education offices. However, minimal collaboration between the district and central offices has meant that the higher levels of MoEST (i.e. division and headquarters) are sometimes not aware of NGOs activities at the district level. Even within a district, coordination of NGO activities is usually so poor resulting in duplication of efforts. A recent study on the impact of HIV/AIDS on the education sector noted that collaboration between MoEST and NGOs offering orphan support and HIV/AIDS education within schools was poor and there was lack of coordination of activities (Kadzamira et al 2001). A study on community sensitisation and mobilisation noted that lack of cooperation and collaboration amongst organisations caused imbalances in the distribution of projects and in some areas two NGOs would target the same school for their interventions while the other schools in the same zone were ignored (Chimombo et al 2001). In the HIV/AIDS study, schools in the urban sample were overwhelmed with visits from NGOs involved in HIV/AIDS prevention programmes while schools in the rural sample complained that they rarely received any support from these NGOs. It was also observed that NGOs delivering HIV/AIDS education in schools, sometimes brought conflicting messages thereby confusing the youth and some of the messages contradicted what was taught in the curriculum (Kadzamira et al 2001).

Lack of coordination between various sections within MoEST and of various NGOs has created problems in the past. For example, lack of proper coordination has resulted in competition for PEAs time by the various development partners with much of the PEAs time being spent on attending workshops instead of supervising teachers and schools. There was a general feeling amongst most of the government, NGOs and donor officials interviewed that there is great need for MoEST to regulate and provide direction and guidance to NGO activities in the sector.

There was a feeling that currently, MoEST does not tightly regulate the education sector. Without a framework and guidelines with which to regulate NGO activity in the sector, monitoring has also been weak or non-existent. This has resulted in a concentration of NGO activities in a few areas particularly urban, neglecting other equally needy areas. For instance, within education there is a feeling that NGOs are concentrated in Mangochi district and in the four major cities while most rural areas have been ignored.

There also has been little or no collaboration during the development and design of NGOs programmes. MoEST officials expressed the concern that most NGOs rarely consult MoEST when they are designing and planning their programmes. According to one of the MoEST officials interviewed there have not been any serious discussions so far between MoEST and the various NGOs working in the sector about government adoption of their projects and scaling up.

With the new law MoEST will assume greater control over NGOs areas of operation and implementation, however with the problems mentioned above it is not clear how the issues will be resolved for optimum interaction with NGOs. The issue of decentralisation also poses another dilemma. Decisions will made at district level which will poses problems of equity between districts and coordination between districts and higher levels.

3.3 Factors Affecting the Relationship Between NGOs and Government

One of factors affecting the relationship between NGOs and government is the nature of the programme being implemented. In cases where NGOs are implementing nationally designed programmes the relationship has been harmonious especially in areas where MoEST lacks capacity like in community mobilisation, sensitisation and empowerment (as is the case with CRECCOM social mobilisation campaigns as well as in the development of a national strategy for primary school management by CARE International). In both cases MoEST officials have worked closely with the NGOs in the design and implementation of the programmes and there were established and clear linkages between the NGOs and various levels of the ministry. The involvement of MoEST in all other aspects of the programme has ensured consensus building right from the initial stages of the programmes thus resulting in fewer conflicts.

NGO designed programmes can become quite controversial particularly where interaction and collaboration with all levels of the ministry is lacking. The case of the VBS schools, is an example where lack of collaboration between MoEST and SCF (US) from the early stages largely because of frequent changes in critical personnel at MoEST resulted in disputes.

As more and more NGOs get involved in the direct implementation of education programmes and in areas previously a preserve of government there is likely to be more areas of conflict if no mechanisms are put in place to ensure that there is a close working relationship between development partners in education. One such area where there has been much tension between MoEST and NGOs is in the area of advocacy. Some MoEST officials feel that NGOs involved in advocacy are politicking as the approach that some of these NGO have taken is quite confrontational.

Several other factors influencing the relationship between NGO and government can be identified. First, is lack of networking between various levels of MoEST itself. NGOs expressed concern over the lack of coordination among the various sections of the ministry, which sometimes makes their work difficult as they get conflicting messages from the various departments. Second, are the frequent changes in education policy, usually without much consultation, which create problems for NGOs. Thirdly, in some cases MoEST does not involve the NGO community (as a whole) in the education policy process. In 2000 for example NGOs and other members of the civil society were invited to attend the opening session of the government/donor joint sector education review but were not allowed to participate in the deliberations that followed. Subsequently, in 2001 the civil society was fully involved in the joint sector review probably as a result of donor pressure.

3.4 Impact of Government Policies on NGO programmes

MoEST expect that all NGOs implementing education programmes should adhere to government policy and standards. Most NGOs implementing education programmes are operating within government policy. However, in cases where NGOs implementing pilot programmes or innovations they tend run counter to government policy.

Examples where this has occurred are in the areas of teacher quality, teacher recruitment and deployment and school construction. The case of the Village Based Schools programme implemented by SCF (US) is a classic example of how government policies can impact on NGOs programme objectives. The main objective of the VBS programme which was implemented under the Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE) programme was to pilot test ways of increasing access of girls to schools by building schools closer to the home, involving the community in the running of the schools and recruiting female teachers to act as role models for girls. In order to attract female teachers and ensure community involvement in school governance, the VBS programme decided to recruit teachers locally resulting in the recruitment of teachers whose educational qualifications were below the minimum government set standards. MoEST vehemently opposed to the recruitment of teachers who fell below the minimum standards and indicated that it would not take over the payment of salaries of such teachers at the end of the pilot programme. MoEST did not also like the idea of involving the community in the selection and recruitment of teachers for the schools. MoEST felt that recruitment and deployment of teachers were its sole responsibility.

As a result of pressure from government SCF (US) had to modify its VBS programme to make it conform to government set standards. This was despite that an external evaluation had shown that the use of PSLCE teachers in lower grades did not negatively affect pupils' achievement and SCF (US) was able to reach their target of recruiting at least 50% female teachers (Hyde et al 1996). All teachers with PSLCE qualifications were given support to upgrade themselves to JCE level. MoEST has also taken over the recruitment of teachers though the recruitment is still done locally.

Community mobilisation and empowerment programmes implemented by some NGOs have the potential by their nature of contradicting government policy. NGOs such as CRECCOM have empowered communities to improve quality of education in their areas by addressing some of the constraints facing their communities some of which are a consequence of failure of government policy to meet their needs. For instance in some of the communities mobilised by CRECCOM, community members have employed voluntary teachers as one way of addressing chronic teacher shortages in their schools. Most of these voluntary teachers do not meet the minimum education standards as specified in the Education Act. Though voluntary teachers are supposed to be a stopgap measure to alleviate the problem of teacher shortages in the short term, in some schools they have become a permanent feature because of government failure to deploy adequate number of teachers to the schools.

Another area of contention between NGOs and MoEST policy has been in the area of school construction. MoEST has protested over the quality of most schools constructed by NGOs, as they do not meet the standard specified by the ministry, which are quite high and more costly.

In a quest to reduce costs of implementing programmes most NGOs and some donor-funded projects have used the concept of community participation in the construction of schools where the community provides labour and the NGOs or donor provide funding for skilled labour and acquisition of more expensive items such as cement and iron sheets. The consequence of this approach has been poorly constructed schools most of which do not meet the standards for school construction set by the ministry. The ministry itself has failed to enforce the standards leaving NGOs and other players the freedom to determine the quality of their schools. Recently the ministry has made a concerted effort to enforce construction standards. The SCF (US) has had to abandon the construction standards used for VBS schools and in the QUEST programme all schools have been built to government standards. It is not entirely clear how the government will deal with community initiated projects, which at times have put up temporary shelters to alleviate classroom or school shortages as is happening in some of the communities mobilised by CRECCOM. Given the resource constraints faced by the education sector, the high school construction standards set by the government may not be feasible in the short term to clear the current backlog of classroom requirements and meet new demands.

NGOs interventions in the area of curriculum have also produced mixed reactions. Generally MoEST has always regarded the curriculum as its own baby and efforts by some NGOs to design an alternative curriculum have been frowned upon within MoEST. Thus while MoEST has welcomed the idea of a modified integrated curriculum that concentrates on the development of literacy and numeracy skills in the first four years by collaborating with SCF (US) in pilot testing the intervention in government schools, other officials are wary that the interest being shown by other NGOs particularly church based ones who control the majority of primary schools might result in the ministry losing its grip on the curriculum. On the other hand the ministry has had a major confrontation with church based NGOs over its decision to replace Bible Knowledge with Religious and Moral Education in the secondary schools curriculum.

Government insistence that NGO programmes should comply with existing policy might in the end frustrate NGOs primary role of working with the grassroots and implementing new and innovative approaches of delivering education in situations where current policy has failed to move the education system forward. Government lack of flexibility to allow other approaches outside its policy framework to be tested might in the long run thwarts its own efforts to expand the educational system.

3.5 Role Donors Have Played in the Relationship Between Government and NGOs

The perception of some of the government officials interviewed was that NGOs listen more to their donors than to government and that NGOs do not consult ministry when they are putting up their proposals to the donors. There was a feeling that sometimes NGOs compete with government for donor funding.

In some respects donors have acted as a go between NGOs and government particularly when there is a conflict. Donors have made it possible to create dialogue between government and NGO where there has been some conflict. For example the role USAID has played with SCF (US) case. Usually donors are reluctant to support programmes, which are in direct conflict with government policy and are quick to advise NGOs to change course if government does not like

what they see. Government has opened to NGO coalitions by involving them in the policy making process at the instigation of donors. Strained relationships have thawed because of the donor pressure on both sides.

4.0 ROLE OF NGOS IN POLICY CHANGE

As has already been mentioned, since 1994 there has been a major shift in NGOs activities from school construction and provision of supplies (i.e. the 'hardware' components) to direct involvement in the implementation of education sometimes involving the use of innovative strategies in the areas of curriculum, teacher training, teacher recruitment and deployment and school governance. In line with the new role, NGOs have increasingly included advocacy as part and parcel of their strategies to improve access and educational quality. However, the number of NGOs with an explicitly stated advocacy mandate is still very small. NGOs have increasingly come to realise the need for them to be actively involved in the policy development process as one of the key development partners in the education sector. To this effect NGOs in education have come together and formed coalitions with the aim of working together and with one voice advocate for policy change within the education sector.

4.1 Impact of NGOs on Policy Change

NGOs have had limited impact on policy change in the education sector in Malawi. This may not be surprising given the short history of non-faith based international and local NGOs. In addition, the utilisation of research and other knowledge for policy formulation in education is relatively low and MoEST does not have the tradition of consulting stakeholders on important policy issues (Swainson et al 1998, Chimombo 1999, Kadzamira and Rose 2001).

Generally, the government has not fully welcomed NGOs involvement in the policy development process, an area that it has regarded as its main domain. Within MoEST there is a general feeling that NGOs activities should be confined to their traditional roles of service provision particularly in areas where government capacity is lacking and in implementing and testing education innovations, as one government official put it, *'government plans education, donor pledge money and NGOs implement and co-fund'*.
NGOs were not widely consulted during the initial development of the PIF and within the PIF there is lack of acknowledgement of the roles that NGOs can play in its implementation. Others feel that NGOs should only advocate and lobby government for policy change by demonstrating through their programmes what is possible. Government contention is that NGOs involved in advocacy have little or no experience in implementing educational programmes and therefore are not in a position to advise what should be done. Government is slowly acknowledging the role of NGOs within the sector and the importance of including them in any policy development process as seen by their inclusion in some of the important policy forums such as the joint education sector review and in the policy consultative process.

Though NGO programmes have not managed to effect policy change, they have at least in some cases managed to influence policy direction. Some NGOs programmes have been successful in initiating debate and dialogue on policy issues, which in itself is a positive development in the policy formulation process. NGO programmes have provided important lessons, which have informed policy formulation process. For example, the Policy and Investment Framework was to some extent influenced by the research findings from the social mobilisation campaign conducted by Creative Associates International and then later on CRECCOM. The debates over standards, which have arisen out of some NGO programmes such as the VBS, have led to the

involvement of NGOs in policy dialogue. MoEST now recognises the important role NGOs can play in the policy process because of their experiences in implementing education programmes and also their knowledge about what is prevailing on the ground. There has been a move to increasingly involve NGOs in policy dialogue as evidenced by the involvement of the NGO sector in the joint government/donor education reviews and government/donor coordination meetings. NGOs such as TUM, SCF (US), CRECCOM, Action Aid and CARE International have also been invited to participate as members of various technical teams that were responsible for drafting or reviewing educational policy such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and the PIF.

NGOs implementing nationally designed programmes such as Creative Associates Inc, CRECCOM, and SCF US) appear to have been relatively more successful in influencing policy direction than those implementing their own programmes on a smaller scale. Where NGOs are implementing government-sanctioned programmes there is usually a close working relationship with MoEST.

4.2 How NGOs Have Influenced Policy Change

A number of strategies have been employed by NGOs in Malawi in their quest to influence policy. These have ranged from the formation of networking groups to advocate policy change, demonstration- trying out of new ideas and innovations in their programmes, research and strategy papers and presentations at various fora.

Networking and Advocacy

NGOs within the education sector have organised themselves into networking groups to advocate for policy change. The idea of bringing civil society groups under one umbrella for policy advocacy came out of a recommendation from a research study commissioned by Oxfam and Action Aid to determine areas of need within education which could be taken up by NGOs.

Efforts to bring NGOs together to speak to government with one voice have so far produced two NGO networking groups, the NGO/government alliance for basic education formed in 1999 under the sponsorship of Action Aid and the civil society coalition for quality basic education established in 2000 under Oxfam and CARE International. The two groups are using different approaches to influence educational policy.

The NGO/government alliance has included government (Ministries of Education and Gender) as members, a move that is strongly opposed by the other group. They believe that the best way of influencing government policy is to work closely together with the government and hence the inclusion of MoEST and MoGYCS as members of the coalition. Other public institutions involved in education such as MIE, MANEB and UNESCO are also members of the alliance. The alliance is mainly composed of local NGOs and has a total of 19 members, all but three of which are local NGOs and is currently chaired by Save the Children Malawi a local NGO.

The approach adopted by the alliance is that of collaboration and cooperation with government to ensure that government views them as partners and not adversaries. The alliance has opted for a

policy of quiet diplomacy through participation in various activities within the sector and lobbying government on various issues of their concern. So far the alliance has had meetings with government officials including an audience with the Deputy Minister of Education and has participated in a number of policy forums such as in the development of the PRSP for education. The government also has consulted them on a number of issues such as when the PIF was being finalised. Issues that they have brought to the attention of government have included teacher training, adult literacy, early childhood education, national forum on EFA and clear demarcations of roles and responsibilities between MoEST and MoGYCS in basic education. So far the alliance has lobbied the Parliamentary Committee on Education for a clear long-term policy on teacher education and training including training of teacher trainers at all levels of the education system. They have also being pushing MoGYCS on the need of developing a national adult literacy policy so that NGOs who are working in this area can have some direction. It would appear that the NGO/government advocacy has focussed on issues that its member organisation deal with such as adult literacy and early childhood education.

The alliance has only been in existence for a short period, and therefore it is still a bit premature to assess its impact on policy change. Moreover, it would not be that easy to attribute any changes in policy in these areas to their efforts alone, as they are so many players on the ground who are also advocating for policy change both within and outside government. But what is evident and perhaps even more important is that the relationship between government and the alliance is cordial allowing for meaningful dialogue and collaboration, which are necessary preconditions policy change. Further, government seem to have a more positive attitude towards the alliance than the civil society coalition.

The main objective of the civil society coalition for quality basic education is to improve the quality of basic education by supporting and influencing the implementation of government policy using research and advocacy, community mobilisation and co-ordination among member organisations (Civil Society 2001). The current membership of the coalition stands at sixteen and nine of the members are international NGOs. The Teacher Union of Malawi houses the secretariat of the coalition.

The main approach the coalition has used so far to advocate for policy change has been a confrontational one. One of the first things they did for example was to issue a press release in the national papers criticising government for failing to reopen teacher training colleges and letting them lay idle for two years when a lot of the teachers were still untrained.

The confrontational approach has produced a great deal of controversy and mixed reactions. This and the fact that the coalition membership initially composed of mainly international NGOs most of whom were foreign and white has only succeeded in hardening ministry's negative attitude towards the coalition. MoEST officials interviewed think that the coalition is political and antagonistic and have questioned the credibility of the criticisms levied against government as baseless and not reflecting what is happening on the ground. There was also a general consensus amongst some of the donors and NGOs interviewed that the confrontational approach is not appropriate in the context of Malawi. *'The best way to work with government is with humility...never go with the stance of knowing more than they do'*. A recent report on civil society organisations also reached the same conclusion. The report states that government tends

to respond more positively to a cooperative than a confrontational approach and that for civil society organisations to gain government confidence they will need to handle the government with great tact, maturity and diplomacy skills (James 2001).

The coalition has since modified its approach and is now using more non-confrontational approaches and has attempted to make their criticisms of government more constructive by offering solutions as well providing cost estimates of strategies proposed. They have also successfully lobbied and held discussions with Parliamentary Committees on Budget and Finance and Education to increase budgetary allocation to three priority areas namely teacher education, teacher salaries and teaching and learning materials. They have used research to inform policy formulation by commissioning the Centre for Educational Research and Training to carry out a research study on community mobilisation and sensitisation whose findings were used to inform the development of a national strategy for primary school management by government facilitated by CARE International.

Recently the coalition has also taken on board a new role of budget monitoring in the three priority poverty expenditures in education which might increase their potential to influence policy but may also increase tensions and conflict between government and themselves (James 2001). Already, attempts to start monitoring process after the first quarter of the budget have foiled because no proper consultations were made with the relevant ministry (Finance) and government is also somewhat suspicious of the intentions of civil society.

There are mixed feelings about the impact of the coalition on policy change. Within the coalition, the perception is that the strategies they have employed to influence policy change have been highly successful despite initial hiccups, which affected their relationship with government. The government attitude on the other hand is that the coalition is just re-inventing the wheel since some of the issues raised by coalition were already been addressed or implemented by government as for example was the case with the teacher training colleges.

Church based NGOs have also in the recent past networked to influence government policy in their favour and interest. The Christian NGOs involved in education have formed a networking group called Association for Christian Education in Malawi (ACHEM) through which they have successfully lobbied against the removal of Bible Knowledge as an elective in the secondary school curriculum and also negotiated for more control in the management of church owned grant aided secondary schools. The church based NGOs do not see policy advocacy as their main role. They have only moved in to influence policy in areas where they feel that their interests are being challenged, as was the case with the issue of curriculum. The Catholic secretariat for instance, closed down its grant-aided schools to force government to consider increasing school fees and funding to their schools and influence the appointment of Catholic as head teachers in their schools.

Demonstration/experimentation

One of the roles of NGOs in education has been that of experimentation and testing of new approaches to education delivery. NGOs have expected that their programmes would influence policy change and at least adopted by government. In Malawi NGOs such as SCF (US) and

Action Aid have implemented innovative programmes in the areas of primary education and adult literacy respectively. As has already being pointed out, the programmes have not led to any significant changes in government policy. However, the programmes have been successful in initiating debates over standards and have contributed to the current recognition on part of government and donors of the role NGOs in the policy development process. The new approaches of teaching of literacy used by Action Aid have not influenced the government functional literacy programme. Similarly, the VBS programme failed to change government standards on teacher and school quality. The VBS programme is said however, to have influenced government policy on class size. The effectiveness of the integrated curriculum in raising pupil achievement has led government to sanction the experimentation of this curriculum in government schools under the QUEST programme being implemented by SCF (US).

Policy Briefing Seminars/Meetings

Other NGOs like CRECCOM have used policy-briefing seminars that target the top policy makers within the relevant ministries to influence government policy. Again, these have had limited impact in changing government policy. However, findings from CRECCOM research and interventions in the community have influenced government to allow some flexibility in timetabling and school calendar. In addition, the success of CRECCOM approach to community mobilisation has made government realise the importance of community participation in education. For example, MoEST officials have had discussions with local chiefs over the clash between school calendar and initiation ceremonies that have affected children's attendance in schools in some districts in Southern Malawi. This was unthinkable in the past.

5.0 ROLE OF NGOS IN COMMUNITY EMPOWERMRNT AND CIVIL SOCIETY LINKAGES

Most NGOs in education have adopted a multi-sectoral or integrated approach to development and are implementing education programmes alongside other interventions such as health, agriculture, agriculture, food security, water and sanitation, advocacy and orphan care. Community empowerment has been part and parcel of this integrated approach. They have used various strategies to empower the communities to play an active role in the development process. This is also one area where NGOs have an edge over government in terms of capacity and technical know how. Moreover, NGOs are in a better position to link up communities with other organisations because they tend to work at grass-root levels.

5.1 NGO's and Community Empowerment

Within education community empowerment has often meant involving communities in the running of schools mainly through representation. To empower communities most NGOs have included capacity building components in their education programmes that aim at equipping community members with knowledge and skills, which would enable them to meaningfully participate in school governance. Within communities NGOs have worked with local structures such as the VDC, school committee, PTA and key stakeholders such as traditional, religious leaders and other community leaders.

The main strategy that NGOs in education have used to empower communities is through community capacity building, which mainly takes the form of training. For example, programmes implemented by Action Aid, CRECCOM, SCF (US) have all emphasised the training of community members as well as education personnel. NGOs education programmes have targeted community structures such as school committees, PTAs, VDC and community leaders. The aim of the training is to enable them to assume their various roles in school governance. Where these do not exist, NGOs have facilitated their formation. NGOs have played a key role in empowering communities to substantively participate in the running of their schools and have been the key players in shifting community involvement beyond mere provision of labour and other resources. The key factors contributing to community involvement have been identified as training, use of research and needs identification and prioritisation and use government field level personnel such as PEAs and CDAs (Chimombo et al 2001).

One of the key players in community empowerment is CRECCOM, which has implemented several mobilisation campaigns around the issues of girls' education, AIDS awareness and educational quality. A conceptual model for community mobilisation whose main mode of disseminating information is through person-to-person interaction has been developed and applied successfully. The SMC conceptual model being used combines several strategies including research and verification using participatory methods and drama, field worker training for CDAs and PEAs, community based sensitisation targeting school committees, teachers, community leaders and special interest groups and village/school based initiatives where action plans are developed. These are supported by three additional components namely, stakeholder involvement, mass communication interventions and role model initiative. This approach has

been highly successfully in empowering communities to take responsibility for achieving quality education in their schools and also for changing perceptions about the importance of girls' education. Evidence show that where CRECCOM has mobilised communities, they have been empowered to take action to achieve quality education and also meaningfully participate in making decisions on their school.

NGOs Interaction with Communities

Needs assessment and prioritisation using participatory methods is a popular strategy used by NGOs as an entry point into the community. NGOs that have used this approach in implementing education programmes include Action Aid, World Vision, SCF (US) and CRECCOM. NGOs have also used influential people in the communities to mobilise people to get involved in education. Community leaders such as traditional authorities and religious leaders have been used by the NGOs to establish linkages with communities. CRECCOM for example, targets community leaders first until they reach school committees and teachers.

Role of NGOs in Linking Communities and Other Organisations

It is assumed that by virtue of their being in contact with grass roots and other levels of the system, they could easily provide the required linkage between communities and government and other organisations. For example the two coalitions that have been forms within education, offer an opportunity of linking up community aspirations to policy makers since of the members of the groups are implementing projects within the communities. Although, the NGOs work in isolation in the communities, the coalitions provide a forum where they can share experiences and linkages. The current polarisation of the NGO's community in education may hamper the creation of effective linkages.

NGOs have also increasingly made use of government field level personnel in particular CDAs and PEAs. It is evident that in areas where NGOs have worked they have promoted better interaction and linkages between various sections of government enabling ministries, which had never worked together before to do so.

As has already been said NGOs have strengthened community institutions and structures through training to make them more effective thereby improving linkages between various levels of government and the communities. Training of school committee members for example has not only improved community-school links but also between MoEST and the communities. For instance Action Aid tries to identify effective institutions within the communities they are working in and build their capacity in order to establish linkages with government structures.

Another form of linkage occurs where one NGOs acts as a donor to another NGOs. For example CARE International intends to support civil society by targeting small Malawian NGOs and provide them with grants and training. International and well-established NGOs have been used by donors to channel resources to local NGOs.

6.0 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NGOs AND DONORS

Prior to 1994, educational NGOs were generally sidelined by both donors and government (Chaturvedi, 1994). There has been significant increase in donor support to NGOs and also of NGO managed donor programmes in education. However, the instances of this are still very low in Malawi partly because there are a few NGOs implementing or specialising in education programmes. Donors have significantly influenced the development of civil society in Malawi through the provision of funding to NGO programmes and have even assisted in the development of NGOs themselves. For example USAID through its SHARED project have assisted a number of NGOs to strengthen their resource capacity and fund their programmes. USAID also supported the creation of CRECCOM as a local NGO from the GABLE SMC activities and have continued to fund its programmes. DANIDA too has been in forefront of assisting the development of civil society and funding of many NGOs. Most if not all NGOs are dependent on donor funding and this has influenced the nature of relationship existing between donors and NGOs.

This section provides insight into how donors and NGOs work and collaborate with respect to policy, implementation and funding of education programmes. It shows how NGOs strive to strike a balance between their goals and those of donors and lastly it also shows how donors perceive the roles of NGOs.

6.1 NGO and Donor Relationships

The nature of relationship and collaboration between donors and NGOs is again determined by the nature of programme being implemented i.e. whether it is a donor or NGO designed programmes.

Donor Programmes

Where government is perceived to lack the capacity donors have relied on NGOs expertise and experience to implement aspects of their programme support. In education, donors have for instance used NGOs to implement community sensitisation and mobilisation projects an area where MoEST clearly lacks capacity. Examples of this have included the USAID funded GABLE programme in which the social mobilisation campaign component of the programme was contracted out to an NGO, Creative Associates International and later on CRECCOM. UNICEF too, has used NGOs in particular SCF (US) to mobilise communities to construct schools on self-help basis with assistance of materials for construction in its NORAD funded projects. DANIDA contracted CARE International to facilitate the development of a national strategy for primary school management one of the components of the DANIDA sector support to the education sector in collaboration with MoEST.

All these are examples of national programmes, which are fully sanctioned by the government. There is usually close collaboration between the NGO implementing the programme with MoEST and the donor. In such cases donors regard the NGO as a partner. However, in most cases the donor determines the parameters under which the NGOs should operate to achieve its

policy goals. In such cases the NGO has little say in the modalities of implementation. These are therefore donor driven projects where NGOs are relegated to mere implementators.

NGO Designed Programmes

Because of financial constraints and limited sources of funding NGOs have depended on bilateral and multilateral donors to fund their programmes. This has tended to compromise NGOs interests and priorities as NGO designed programmes have tended to lean towards donor interests and priorities to ensure funding. NGOs have their own mission statements that guide them in identifying areas of need and determine their own priorities. If these are too divergent from donor interests then funding may not be forthcoming. In Malawi sectarian NGOs have received less funding from bilateral and multilateral donors, because they are seen to serve their own interests. Thus though sectarian NGOs have played a significant role in education in Malawi, donors have rarely provided funding to them directly. For instance, Sub-Saharan African Family Enrichment (SAFE) a Christian based NGO currently implementing an HIV/AIDS prevention curriculum (WHY WAIT) in schools has failed to get support from donors to expand its activities to more schools because of its emphasis on Christian based messages in its HIV/AIDS prevention programme[1] This is despite the fact that the WHY WAIT curriculum has been endorsed by MoEST and is currently being offered at both primary and secondary levels.

It easy for NGOs to get donor funding if their programmes fall in line with donor priorities. UNICEF is currently funding an NGO designed programme by providing material assistance to Chisomo Children's home which provide education and care to street children and also funds a number of youth NGOs implementing in HIV/AIDS prevention programmes in line with one of its overall objective of ensuring that school children and adolescents are educated on HIV/AIDS and life skills to enable them make informed choices.

Other sources of funding

Apart from the government and bilateral and multilateral donors, other sources of funding for NGOs in education have included child sponsorship, partnerships with other NGOs and civil society organisations and from private sector. International NGOs such as SCF (US), Plan International, World Vision and Action Aid have used child sponsorship to partly finance their educational programmes. Other smaller NGOs have benefited from partnership with larger and well-known NGOs. TUM for example has gone into partnership with the Canadian Teachers' Federation to conduct teacher-training courses. In this venture both Canadians and Malawians act as trainers in courses that are sanctioned by Ministry of Education. International NGOs such as Oxfam and CARE International are planning or have provided assistance to local NGOs particularly in capacity building. ADRA (Malawi) has funded a number of other NGOs in orphan care and HIV/AIDS from funding it received from DANIDA. Other NGOs have embarked on fund raising activities including income-generating activities.

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[1] personal communication with SAFE Director.

Challenges

The challenges faced are many and varied. Some donors have been reluctant to implement programmes through NGOs because the financial and human resource constraints which tend to affect project implementation. UNICEF assistance for example, only covers programme activities and not project overheads such as salaries and yet most NGOs expect donors to fund the overheads of the projects they are implementing. Furthermore the financial constraints faced by most NGOs have limited the human resource capacity of NGOs as such lack personnel to adequately implement and monitor projects. This has made NGOs less attractive to donors as partners in programme implementation. Credibility is also an important factor that donors consider before contracting an NGO to implement its programmes or provide funding fro NGOs activities. Since many of the local NGOs are new and lack credibility there has been reluctance on the part of donors to contract out projects to local NGOs or even provide them with funding. Structural constraints such as lack of human capacity have forced some donors such as UNICEF to limit NGO involvement to school construction and provision of supplies.

Some donors are reluctant to accept NGOs programmes in their entirety. Donor funding has also been slow to materialize once agreements are made. In addition to this donor funds are restricted to given time frames and once those are exceeded it becomes extremely difficult to retrieve the funds. NGOs efforts to serve community needs have also been hampered by both financial constraints and also the lengthy bureaucratic formalities required to obtain financial support from international agencies, which places heavy burden on NGO staff capacity and time (Chaturvedi 1994).

Very few local NGOs in education receive funding from donors. FAWEMA, CRECCOM, SCF (Malawi) and Chisomo Children's' home are some of the few local NGOs that have enjoyed financial support from donors for their activities. Credibility of local NGOs has been a major factor determining whether they get funding or not. Reports of many local NGOs failing to account for the money received have made donors view them with suspicion. The few indigenous NGOs being funded by donors have had important linkages with other organisation mainly reputed international NGOs on whose ticket local NGOs have accessed donor funding or have had the experience of implementing donor funded programmes successfully as is the case with CRECCOM.

Donors rely on their project officers to monitor donor funded programmes but this may not be always adequate so sometimes use is made of MoEST structures such as DEOs and PEAs to supplement donor monitoring activities (as is the case of UNICEF). USAID has cooperative agreements with the two NGOs it supports in education and each of the NGOs is supposed to produce a quarterly, provide an annual work plan and an end of year report. Most donors also demand NGOs should have audited accounts before they can consider them, for funding a conditionality which many local NGOs fail to comply.

6.2 Relationship between NGO and Donor Priorities

NGOs rely almost exclusively on external sources of funding and usually seek funding from donors. NGOs have mission statements, which guide them in identifying areas of need.

However, because of the dependency on donor funding, NGOs programmes have to a large extent been donor driven. Donor priorities have affected NGOs priorities and programmes. It is believed that the proliferation of NGOs after the democratisation process in Malawi was largely determined by donor priorities such that the majority of NGOs that were established were human rights NGOs in line with donor priorities on governance issues existing at that time. The current donor interest in issues dealing with HIV/AIDS has also led to the mushrooming of NGOs in this area.

Within the education sector, donor priorities have also affected NGO programmes. Currently donors are into basic education and proposals in other educational sectors are difficult to get funded. The current emphasis on primary education by donors has affected NGOs concentrating on other levels of education in that their programmes have rarely received donor attention because of their priorities differ. NGOs implementing programmes at secondary level indicated that donors are currently providing nothing for secondary education. Adult literacy and early childhood education programmes have rarely received much attention from donors despite the despite the evidence linking early childhood education and subsequent performance in schools and despite the low adult literacy levels especially amongst women. That the majority of NGO programmes in Malawi tend to be driven by donor priorities rather than NGO priorities may not be very surprising in a country like Malawi where donors have exerted considerable influence on educational policy and because of the dependence of the education budget on donor funding (Kadzamira and Rose 2001).

It was also reported that donors are reluctant to accept programmes designed by NGOs. NGOs are also often discouraged from seeking donor funding by the lengthy bureaucratic formalities required to obtain financial support from international agencies. The integrated approach to development adopted by many NGOs may not necessarily conform to donor priorities, as donors tend to concentrate on one sector.

Some of the NGOs interviewed were of the opinion that donors just like government do not always consult them on important policy issues. Donors use their financial muscle to influence government policy to the extent that some donors instead of supporting the implementation of the PIF have been coming up with parallel policy plans. The apparent competition among donors to gain an upper hand in influencing government policy has according to some NGOs made the work of NGOs difficult.

6.3 Donors' Perceptions of NGOs Roles

Donors interviewed for this study regarded NGOs as important development partners in improving access and also defining government policy. Donors have used their influence with government to get NGOs participate more fully in the policy formulation process. They have acted as an important linkage between government and NGOs. Donors recognise that NGOs are in a better position to articulate the needs of communities because they work with communities at the grass-root level. Donors like government perceive the primary role of NGOs to be that of providing educational services and introducing and testing innovative education programmes. Other donors were of the view that NGOs will have an expanded role once decentralisation process is complete because of lack of capacity at district level. The current support to NGOs

efforts to get government recognise their role in policy formulation process is a clear testimony that donors have increasingly come to accept the role of NGOs and see them as development partners.

7.0 LESSONS LEARNED

The foregoing sections have discussed several issues concerning NGOs participation in the education sector in Malawi. This section lays out some of the lessons that can be drawn from the experiences.

7.1 Regulation and Monitoring

Regulation of NGOs within the education sector is weak. MoEST does not tightly regulate the education sector because among other things the existing Education Act does not make adequate provisions to mandate MoEST to regulate private sector involvement in the education sector. This has resulted in duplication of efforts even among the NGOs themselves and a concentration of NGOs in specific geographical locations and areas of concern while others areas have been ignored. The absence of clear mechanisms to regulate NGOs means that there is hardly any monitoring of NGOs activities by MoEST. However, as part of the new NGO law, MoEST will be required approve NGOs' programmes in education and will assume greater responsibility and control over NGOs' areas of activity and location. The mechanisms of how this is going to be done have not been spelt out yet.

There is need therefore for MoEST to regulate the operations of NGOs in the education sector. For planning purposes MoEST needs to keep track of all NGO activities within the sector and to some extent provide guidance to its development partners on areas of need and focus. This will ensure that there exists a balanced distribution of activities by location. In addition this will also minimise duplication of efforts and conflict of interest. The planning units both at central and district levels should provide overall policy guidelines on priority areas which NGOs could focus on taking cognisant of the various roles that NGOs can play.

NGOs also need to be monitored and given direction by MoEST. This will help bring coherence and ensure harmonisation of efforts within the sector. For example, there is need for MoEST and NGOs providing HIV/AIDS prevention education programmes in schools to come together and agree on modalities and a common approach to remove the confusion that exists now. MoEST also need to ensure an even distribution of NGO activities within the sector and also give some guidance to the NGO community on priority areas.

7.2 Collaboration and Coordination

Most NGOs in education have been working in isolation with little or no interaction with other NGOs and also MoEST structures. The little interaction that exists is mostly superficial sometimes involving NGOs requesting permission from DEOs to work in their districts after which there is almost no interaction between the two. Lack of collaboration between government and NGOs has partly contributed to the failure by NGOs to scale up their programmes by getting government adopt some of its programmes. Lack of collaboration has in addition, partly contributed to the poor state of relations between government and NGOs characterised by misgivings about NGOs intentions by government and failure to recognise or acknowledge NGOs as credible development partners.

The institutional linkages between NGOs and MoEST are weak and it seems that NGOs have not been entirely clear about which levels of MoEST they need to interact and collaborate with. Some NGOs have operated at district level without the knowledge of the central ministry. Collaboration and linkages between various levels and sections of the ministry have also been very weak and poor with the result that NGO activities have been poorly coordinated. NGOs lamented over the lack of consistency and meaningful dialogue within MoEST that sometimes results in two departments doing the same thing differently and this has hampered meaningful collaboration between NGOs and MoEST.

It is clear that development partners need to network and work together. Similarly, NGOs need to collaborate with MoEST in all phases of project implementation in order for the system to benefit from the synergy. There is need for MoEST to devise an all-inclusive participatory process that involves NGOs as well as donors themselves. At present, this is not done wholeheartedly. MoEST needs to liaise with its development partners and agree on how they could collaborate.

7.3 Roles of NGOs in Education

The roles of NGOs in education in Malawi have evolved from their traditional roles of service provision e.g. the provision of schools and supplies and experimenting new approaches of service delivery, to policy advocacy and monitoring government performance. The government needs to take cognisance of the various roles NGOs can play. Thus the need for MoEST to allow for some flexibility in accepting experiments and projects that may not fall within its policy framework. This provides an avenue for finding alternative policy initiatives. On their part, NGOs too should involve MoEST fully when designing and implementing new innovations which they expect government to adopt. This has not been the case in the past. A lot of misunderstandings have arisen from the new roles that NGOs in education have taken up especially in policy advocacy and monitoring government performance. The confrontational approach though favoured by the NGO sector worldwide has political and cultural limitations when applied in the context of Malawi. In the Malawi context where the government attitude towards NGOs has largely been negative a confrontational approach might not always be the most appropriate way of influencing government policy. A collaborative approach to policy lobbying would be more appropriate given the current state of relationship between NGOs and the government and also a general lack of capacity on both sides. There is a danger too that coalitions through local and international lobbying will force the government to adopt certain policy recommendations without carefully analysing the implications on the overall system. For example the coalition was successful in lobbying government to increase the budgetary allocation to teaching and learning materials without carefully analysing MoEST capacity to absorb the allocated funds within one fiscal year and without insisting on policy reforms to address the current problems which are hampering effective procurement and distribution of learning and teaching materials to schools.

7.4 Sustainability and Scaling up

Most NGO programmes in education have ended up as projects. Most NGOs have failed to scale up their programmes beyond pilot areas or pilot phases. NGOs programmes have also failed to

influence government policy and have not been adopted by government. It is also clear that issues of sustenance and scaling up of projects should be carefully thought of in the designs of NGOs programmes. The impact of a project becomes diffused when sustenance and scaling up are not incorporated in projects. Capacity building seems to be at the core of this issue. Part of the problem has arisen because NGOs have often designed their programmes without consultation with government or without careful consideration of how the programme will fit in the overall education system. There has also been very little interaction between NGOs and government during implementation of programmes.

Financial constraints have affected the implementation and operations of NGOs programmes. Indigenous NGOs in particular have limited sources of funding. Lack of credibility and transparency has contributed to the reluctance of donors and government to fund NGOs activities. Therefore the new NGO law which requires NGOs to account for its money and operations will go a long way in restoring donor and government confidence in NGOs. Once the NGO regulatory system is fully operational government should consider implementing some of its programme through NGOs. NGOs are expected to have an expanded role when decentralisation of the education system is complete. They can provide support at the district level where capacity is weak. This requires that NGOs should improve their credibility and capacities to take on the challenges that lay ahead.

7.5 NGO Coalitions and Networking

The recent move by NGOs to network is most welcome. However, the current fragmentation of the NGO community in education is highly regrettable. The NGO community in education too small and weak to allow two coalitions to co-exist side by side. Attempts have been made by the two coalitions to resolve differences and hopefully will lead to the merging of the two to create a more formidable force to advocate for policy change. However, there is need for more collaborative approaches in advocating for policy change. Apart from policy advocacy, NGO coalitions should also increase their networking in order to learn from each other or even collaborating in programme implementation.

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